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Sen. Stamas sponsors teacher-inspired legislation

LANSING – Legislation sponsored by Sen. Tony Stamas, R-Midland, that would allow public school employees to purchase service credits for service performed teaching on a military base passed unanimously out of the Michigan State Senate Thursday.

Senate Bill 180 would amend the Public School Employees Retirement Act to allow individuals beginning October 1, 2005 to purchase service credits for work performed as a teacher at a military base before January 31, 1991.

“Teaching is one of the most important professions in our society,” said Stamas, sponsor of the legislation. “I believe that teachers who voluntarily choose to teach abroad on US military bases should be rewarded, not penalized by our retirement system.”

While going door to door to meet with constituents, Stamas was approached by Pauline Hansen, a Beaverton resident and constituent of the 36th Senate District, about sponsoring the legislation.

For five years, Hansen taught for the United States Department of Defense Dependents Schools on military bases in the Philippines and Germany. Currently, she can not buy service credits and count those years towards her retirement.

“I feel this time should count towards retirement,” said Hansen, an early childhood special education teacher for the Midland County Educational Service Agency. “I really appreciate Senator Stamas looking out for the ‘little guy.’ I’m the little guy. Senator Stamas really felt this time should be recognized. He listened to me and my concerns became his concerns.”

Individuals who taught on a United States military base before 1991 had an opportunity between 1989 and 1991 to receive service credits for the work performed. After passage of the Michigan Public School Retirement Act teaching years on a military base were no longer recognized towards retirement in Michigan.

“Polly is a perfect example of why this legislation is so important to teachers all across Michigan,” Stamas said. “This legislation is needed to recognize the efforts, hard work and patriotism of Michigan’s teachers.”

SB 180 will now go before the House of Representatives for consideration.

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Editor’s note: A photo of Sen. Stamas and Pauline Hansen is available for download on the Senate Majority Photowire at:

<http://www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/photowire/Stamas/Stamas.htm>